

Wisconsin DNR Elk Advisory Committee

Wednesday, October 26th 2016

Wisconsin DNR Service Center – Black River Falls, WI

9:30 AM

Members present:

Kevin Wallenfang, *WDNR Wildlife Management Big Game Ecologist - Committee Chair*
Tim Ginnett, *UWSP, Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs*
Dan Storm, *WDNR Science Services – Ungulate Researcher*
Kris Johansen, *WDNR WR Area Wildlife Supervisor – Interim WCD Supervisor*
Peter Bakkan, *WDNR Black River State Forest Property Supervisor*
Kurt Haas, *WDNR Jackson County Conservation Warden*
Lou George, *Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation*
Nick McCann, *GLIFWC Wildlife Biologist – sitting in for Jonathan Gilbert*
Pat Beringer, *WDNR Upper Chippewa Area Wildlife Supervisor*
Laine Stowell, *WDNR Sawyer County/Clam Lake Elk Biologist*
Gary Dieck, *Wisconsin Wildlife Federation*
Sawyer Briel, *WDNR Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Policy Advisor and Communications Manager*
Scott Roepke, *WDNR Jackson and Clark County/Black River Elk Biologist*
Dan Eklund, *USFS Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest Wildlife Biologist*
Jon Schweitzer, *Jackson County Forestry and Parks*

Members absent:

Jonathan Gilbert, *GLIFWC Wildlife Section Leader*
Rich Kirchmeyer, *WI Bowhunters Association*
Tami Ryan, *WDNR Wildlife Health Section Chief*
Allen Jacobson, *Wisconsin Conservation Congress*

Guests present:

Lindsey Long, *WDNR State Wildlife Veterinarian*
DeWayne Snobl, *USDA-Wildlife Services*
Jeff Mordon, *Volunteer*
Delight Mordon, *Volunteer*
Kurt Flack, *RMEF*
Carrie Nelson, *USFS Great Divide District Wildlife Biologist*
Derek Johnson, *WDNR Assistant Big Game Ecologist*
Travis Bryan, *UWSP Graduate Student*

Herd and Habitat Updates

Black River Elk Range (BRER) Update:

The committee discussed the status of the elk released into the BRER in the first two years of translocation. This year, 50 elk were released in mid-July. The status of the BRER herd was reviewed including a few mortalities, the distribution of the herd and rutting activity. Habitat work plans were reviewed and completed projects were covered.

Clam Lake Elk Range (CLER) update:

Local wildlife managers outlined the status of the elk herd in the CLER and habitat work completed. The high amount of rain in the region has stalled many projects. With the help of the BRER and NOD staff and others, new

Flambeau River State Forest health testing facility is almost complete. Most work was completed during the 17, 18 and 19th of August.

Elk and Agriculture

Elk Conflict Response Guidelines:

The Elk Conflict Response Guidelines document is pending final approval by the DNR administration. Should be approved shortly and will then be the go-to document for elk conflict response by DNR staff and local law enforcement.

Cranberry/damage situation update:

DeWayne Snobl from USDA-WS gave a presentation about different types of elk crop damage in the BRER. Only one claim has been paid to date. The cranberry bed fencing contracts and projects were covered. The committee discussed different potential abatement methods that could be tested to reduce conflicts within the range.

Elk Monitoring

Trail camera monitoring update:

DNR research and local wildlife staff updated the committee on the status of elk monitoring and population estimating via trail camera surveys. Wildlife staff and volunteers have placed hundreds of cameras in the BRER and CLER in a grid pattern. The new cameras are handling the elements better and staff are looking into options to increase battery life.

Elk/Wolf Research Project

Local staff and researchers outline the numbers of elk with collars in the BRER and the desired number of elk to get new or replacement collars. The logistics of trapping and collaring were discussed.

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the Wildlife Policy Team (WPT) approve elk to be captured, in the BRER, and re-collared/collar elk with defective collar or those without collars this fall/winter.

CLER Winter Trapping 2016-17

The committee discussed the need and timing of trapping and collaring elk in the CLER. The collars are currently not ordered and funding may not be available in time for trapping this winter. The committee also noted that Kentucky elk released in the following years will have collars.

Recommendation: The committee recommends that no elk be trapped and collared in the CLER during the winter of 2016-17.

Spring calf search/collaring 2017

The committee discussed calf searching in the CLER in 2017 and felt that there may be reasons to hold off until Kentucky elk are released into the range in 2017. These additional cows will aid in search efforts and help focus on the expanded range. Also DNR research staff is coordinating to get a new prototype calf collar for use.

Recommendation: The committee recommends that there be no calf searching in the CLER in 2017, understanding that GPS collars are desired and not available at this time.

Recommendation: The committee recommends that Dan proceeds with procuring up to 5 GPS prototype calf collars for use in the BRER.

U.W.S.P. Research Update

Travis Bryan gave an update on the status of the Master's project about elk range and resource selection. The vegetation sampling is complete and now his work will be focusing on selection using the vegetation, remote sensing and elk location data. These analyses will be used to create selection models.

Elk Reintroduction 2017

Staffing, Crew Leaders, Timeframe, etc. & Logistics planning

The committee was updated on the crew leaders, caretaker and other staffing needs for the 2017 project year. The timeframe of when prep work will be completed and when trapping/transport staff will be in Kentucky was covered.

Funding sources, 2016 expense review

The committee was briefed on 2016 versus 2015 project costs, which 2016 is noticeably lower. Funding sources and remaining amounts were overviewed.

Health Team Updates

Planning for 2017

DNR's health staff updated the committee on disease surveillance requirements and timelines for this project year. The committee was also briefed on BRER necropsy results of any mortalities.

CWD and elk: need for a plan?

The committee discussed CWD and the potential impacts on the elk herd. With the CWD response plan under review the committee discussed the need for an addition to that plan for a wild elk CWD response.

Recommendation: The committee recommends that a sub-group drafts a CWD response plan for elk, which will be reviewed and approved by the committee.

Elk Rule Changes

The committee was briefed on the status of elk management rule changes regarding minimum population size to initiate a hunt, and the 5% permit level. There are planned hearings next year for public review and response to the rule changes.

General Updates

USFS provided an update on the status of Black Torch, which is currently slowed due to the 1,000 year flooding in northern Wisconsin. Also the low lumber prices have contractors holding off as long as they can.

RMEF representatives notified the committee that fundraising has been tough this year.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM